

CARING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH HENOCH-SCHÖNLEIN PURPURA



In Henoch-Schönlein purpura, small blood vessels in the kidneys, skin, joints, or stomach become inflamed.

Larger view of small vessels



The disease affects mostly younger children, usually boys, but older children and adults can get it.



The first symptom may be small purplish spots (purpura), usually on the buttocks or legs. Joints, usually knees and ankles, are painfully swollen.

What Is Henoch-Schönlein Purpura?

Henoch-Schönlein purpura is a disease in which small blood vessels throughout the body become inflamed (swollen, red). These blood vessels may be in the skin, joints, stomach, or kidneys.

This disease is also called allergic purpura or anaphylactoid purpura. It affects mostly younger children (usually boys), but older children and adults may also get it.

Most people recover completely, but recovery may take several months. Also, because of possible kidney problems, regular follow-up blood pressure checks and urine tests will be needed for several months.

What Causes Henoch-Schönlein Purpura?

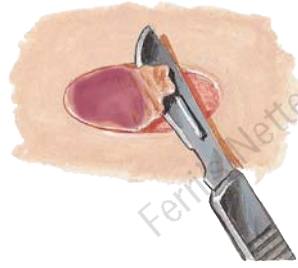
The cause isn't fully known. It usually occurs a few weeks after a strep throat infection or after a cold or other viral infections. Substances (antibodies) produced by the body's immune system to fight the initial infection may contribute to its development.

What Are the Symptoms of Henoch-Schönlein Purpura?

The first symptom may be small purplish spots (purpura), usually on the buttocks and legs. The ankles are always affected. The rash may first look like hives but usually changes to purplish or brownish bruises in 1 to 2 days.

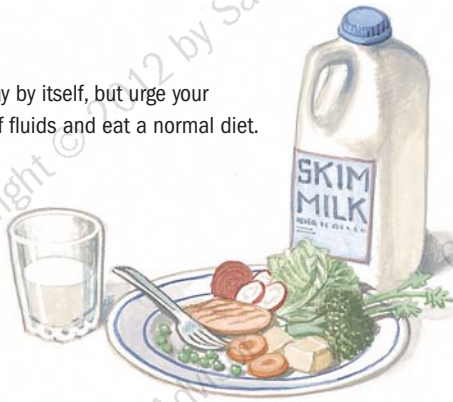
Joints, usually knees and ankles, are painfully swollen. The pain may be so severe that walking is hard.

Other symptoms are pain in the belly (abdomen), nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and blood in the stool or urine. Adolescent girls and women may have painful periods.



The doctor will examine the skin and may take a sample of it, as well as urine and blood samples, for study with a microscope.

This disease goes away by itself, but urge your child to drink plenty of fluids and eat a normal diet.



Don't give aspirin to children. Aspirin may cause the serious Reye's syndrome, with vomiting, restlessness, irritability, and decreased consciousness.



How Is Henoch-Schönlein Purpura Diagnosed?

The doctor will examine the skin and may take a sample of it for study with a microscope. Urine and blood samples may also be taken.

If the doctor thinks that there may be a kidney problem, a kidney biopsy may be done. This biopsy involves using a hollow needle to remove a tiny bit of tissue from the kidney and sending it to a laboratory for study.

How Is Henoch-Schönlein Purpura Treated?

This disease goes away by itself. Symptoms may flare up and disappear several times. The doctor may prescribe medicine for the pain. Over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen, naproxen, or acetaminophen, may also be used to control pain and fever.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Henoch-Schönlein Purpura:

- ✓ **DO** encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids and eat a normal diet as much as possible.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor immediately if the abdominal pain gets worse or the bowel movements (stool) or urine contain blood; if there is puffiness, especially around the face or eyes; or if your child hasn't urinated in more than 12 hours.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor immediately if your child appears very sick.
- ⊘ **DON'T** give aspirin to children, because it may cause a serious illness called Reye's syndrome and may cause increased bleeding from the blood vessels.

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NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- American College of Rheumatology
Tel: (404) 633-3777
Website: <http://www.rheumatology.org>
- American Academy of Dermatology
Tel: (866) 503-SKIN (7546)
Website: <http://www.aad.org>